

# Health Coalition for Children and Youth

October 16, 2012

Dear Members of the Health Benefit Exchange Board,

The Health Coalition for Children and Youth (HCCY) represents a broad partnership of more than 40 organizations that are focused on promoting strong healthcare policies for Washington's children, including innovative and nation-leading programs like Apple Health for Kids. Our cumulative wisdom has taught us important lessons about effectively taking what improves health for all of Washington's kids into consideration when developing programs and policies. The goal of our coalition is to ensure that every child has the tangible opportunity for success with a strong start from a healthy childhood.

**That is why we write to strongly urge the Health Benefit Exchange Board to formally adopt *Equity* as an active core principle in its Exchange development process.** Equity is a foundational concept which must be integrated into all aspects of the work of the Health Benefit Exchange Board as it helps sculpt the future of healthcare in our state.

Washington's current state of healthcare inequity is deeply concerning:

- Infant mortality rates for American Indian babies in this state are more than twice the state average, reflecting the lack of systems that are supportive of American Indian/Alaskan Native families.
- Neighborhoods separated by only a few miles have life expectancies that are 11 years different.
- Low income and minority children also have the highest rates of tooth decay in our state.

These differences in the most basic of health indicators should concern us all. Without Health Equity as a clear and prominent principle in the Exchange's policy development process, even the best intentioned plans can easily lead to even wider gaps.

HCCY proposes a definition of Equity for the Board to consider which is: ***The creation and proactive reinforcement of programs that assure access, quality and outcomes of services that reduce disparities and promote the well-being of all Washingtonians.***

We suggest that the Board look to the example of Apple Health for Kids as a model of innovative healthcare development with a focus on equity.

We further recommend the Health Benefit Exchange Board utilize the following three questions as a method for appreciating the equity impact of policy and program decisions:

1. What do we currently know about the proposed decision's impact on equity and what do we still need to know?
2. Is this decision informed by the voices of the communities impacted?

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American Diabetes Association  
American Lung Association, WA Chapter  
Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance  
Cedar River Group  
Children's Alliance  
Children's Home Society of Washington  
CHOICE Regional Health Network  
Communities Connect  
Community Health Plan  
Community Health Network of Washington  
Community Minded Enterprises  
Coordinated Care  
Equal Start Community Coalition  
Group Health Cooperative  
Faith Action Network (formerly LPPO & AC)  
King County Project Access  
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle  
March of Dimes, WA Chapter  
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital – MultiCare Health System  
Molina Healthcare of Washington  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, WA Chapter  
National Association of Social Workers, Washington State Chapter  
Northwest Health Law Advocates  
Northwest International Health Action Coalition  
Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington  
Professional & Technical Employees, Local 17  
Providence Health & Services  
Public Health - Seattle & King County  
School Nurse Organization of Washington  
Sea Mar Community Health Centers  
Seattle Children's Hospital  
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW  
SEIU WA State Council  
Solid Ground  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Swedish Medical Center  
Washington Association of Community and Migrant Health Centers  
Washington Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Community Action Network  
Washington Dental Service Foundation  
Washington Health Foundation  
Washington State Hospital Association  
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Washington State Nurses Association  
Washington State Oral Health Coalition  
Washington State PTA  
WithinReach

3. What are the differences in outcomes that different corners and communities of Washington will experience due to this decision?

Clearly making Equity a top priority will drive the way Exchange staff, advisors, TACs, stakeholders and other informants bring content to the Board for deliberation. We feel this principle, and processes that incorporate Equity must be enacted as soon as possible in order to keep the Exchange development process efficiently moving forward toward a better system of healthcare for Washington, and better outcomes and stronger families for Washington children.

Thank you for your dedication to building a health system that puts the needs of children and families first. Please contact Lan Nguyen at [Lan@childrensalliance.org](mailto:Lan@childrensalliance.org) with any comments.

Sincerely,

The Health Coalition for Children and Youth